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SUBJECT: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN VIETNAM'S TIP EFFORTS

11. (U) Summary: Vietnam continues to take more direct steps to combat trafficking in persons (TIP), in part with assistance from the international community. New and ongoing strategies include: the creation of anti-trafficking police units in local provinces; a large-scale media and education campaign on both sides of the China-Vietnam border; the release of the first comprehensive statistical report on trafficking in Vietnam; and final stages to approve a national strategy for combating TIP. End Summary.

IMPROVING AWARENESS AND ENFORCEMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

12. (U) According to UNICEF/Hanoi's Nguyen Thi Ha, ineffective enforcement of current laws against sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and children by local government officials remains a major problem, despite the central government's efforts to ensure compliance. Troels Vester, of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime staff in Hanoi, separately attributed this uneven performance to lack of awareness by local officials about trafficking generally and about Vietnamese laws prohibiting trafficking specifically.

13. (U) Beginning in August 2003, UNODC has spearheaded a USG-funded campaign to educate select law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and other officials in Hanoi, Quang Ninh, Ho Chi Minh City, and Tay Ninh on trafficking. In April 2004, the formal training sessions for these officials took place. Presentations and workshops discussed topics including: the difference between human trafficking and smuggling of migrants; victim protection during trial; mutual legal assistance; and investigation principles. Pre- and post-training questionnaires tested participants' awareness of these issues; results showed that "participants improved significantly during the training," Vester said.

14. (U) Encouraged by the success of the UNODC campaign, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) recently decided to set up dedicated anti-trafficking police units in local provinces, funded entirely by the GVN. Exact size, composition, and location of these units have yet to be determined. According to Vester, UNODC will likely work with MPS on the implementation phase of the project, with the first units expected to be put in place by the end of the year. The goal is for these operations to expand to all 63 provinces of Vietnam.

15. (U) From June 26 to July 3, UNODC and ten high-level GVN officials, including the Commissioner of Police, will meet with counterparts in Australia to discuss Australian anti-trafficking efforts as a model to develop these new anti-trafficking units in Vietnam. According to Vester, the trip will be funded in part by the government of Australia as an attempt to increase high-level, bilateral talks on a variety of issues.

UNICEF'S MASS MEDIA AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

16. (U) In addition, UNICEF, the governments of Vietnam and China, the Vietnam Women's Union, and the Women's Union of China recently kicked off a joint mass communications effort to educate people and local government leaders on trafficking, tactics used by traffickers, signs to detect persons being trafficked, and related issues. The campaign also addresses the protection of victims, including health checks for repatriated victims, training on how to counsel trafficked persons, and workshops on local laws regarding sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and children. UNICEF's goals for the campaign are to reduce cross border trafficking and to create a social movement against trafficking.

17. (U) The UNICEF-led campaign will take place in Vietnam and China simultaneously, with the same materials (in different languages) used in both countries. In Vietnam, the campaign is concentrated in Quang Ninh, Lang Son, and Lai Chau provinces in the north and An Giang and Dong Tap provinces in the south. UNICEF's Ha estimated that the campaign would reach approximately 4000 Vietnamese people directly and millions more indirectly, through television, radio, and newspaper announcements. Less than one month

into the project, an estimated US \$50,000 has already gone into the campaign. The campaign is in part funded by UNICEF and is expected to last until the year's end.

18. (U) The mass education campaign grew from bilateral talks regarding increasing trafficking activities in border areas of Vietnam and China. Annual meetings over the issue began in 2001. Last year's bilateral talks resulted in five "unofficial" agreements, one of which is the communications campaign facilitated by UNICEF. No "official" agreements have yet resulted, but Ha predicted that this first-ever joint communication campaign between Vietnam and China will encourage the two countries to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on combating sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and children.

MPS STATISTICAL REPORT ON TRAFFICKING IN VIETNAM

19. (U) Working with Cooperazione Italiana and UNICEF, the MPS also recently released the first comprehensive statistical report on trafficking in Vietnam. The report gathered statistics through June 2003 in 17 key provinces and cities throughout Vietnam: Lao Cai, Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Lang Son, Quang Ninh, Ha Tay, Bac Giang, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ho Chi Minh City, Tay Ninh, An Giang, Dong Thap, Vinh Long, and Can Tho provinces, as well as in two districts located along the China border in Lai Chau province. According to UNICEF and UNODC officials, the actual number of people being trafficked is likely significantly greater than in the report, which focused only on cases confirmed by the police. (MPS has explicitly acknowledged this weakness in the report.) A detailed analysis of the report will follow septel.

2010 PROGRAM OF ACTION ON TRAFFICKING

10. (U) The 5th plenary session of the 9th National Assembly, which concluded on June 15, discussed the current draft of the 2010 National Program of Action on Trafficking in Persons, according to Nghiem Phong Vu of the Office of the National Assembly. Further coordination between MPS and the Chinese Bureau of State Security will be necessary before the draft is final, but the process has moved forward, Vu said. UNODC and UNICEF officials are optimistic about its ratification.

11. (U) The general objective of the new strategy is to "create changes in awareness and action of different levels, departments and the whole society on prevention and combating against trafficking of women and children. . ." It includes four main proposals:

- To increase regular advocacy and education at the community level, particularly in high-risk areas. Designating the Vietnam Women's Union as the lead agency on this objective, the plan assumes that advocacy and education will "integrate the advocacy of the prevention of crimes and social evils, develop cultural families, healthy communes. . . [and provide] support [and] counselling for families of victims, women and children who are vulnerable;"
- To "focus on prevention activities, identification, investigation and sanction on traffickers. . ." The MPS is designated the lead agency for this effort;
- To heighten monitoring at border points. The Border Guard Commanding Bureau will be in charge of conducting, receiving, and transferring traffickers and trafficking victims;
- To strengthen the existing legal framework prohibiting trafficking. Vietnam will conduct research on current laws on trafficking and related issues such as marriage, adoption, tourism, and labor export in order to address loopholes that traffickers might easily exploit.

12. (U) Comment: These recent developments show a continued willingness by the GVN to allocate additional law enforcement resources to address trafficking. The GVN's interest in and need for international assistance and significant bilateral cooperation with China remain high, however. USG funding, currently through UNODC, is already making a positive difference in GVN performance and local attitudes.

PORTER